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Literature, 8

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Title

Millions of African Americans were killed throughout the time of slavery. They were stolen from their homes, brought to America, and treated like property. After centuries of being mistreated and abused, the African race stood up to their owners. They fought for freedom, and most of all, equality. Many died fighting for this. Plessy vs. Ferguson, an important case dealing with the equality of all people, brought out the idea of being separate but equal. This idea, which was no more than the United States trying to stop integration, was something that would be known as being the final barrier between mistreatment and equality.

On July 7, 1892, Homer Plessy went to court to fight the Separate Car Act. This would be a case forever remembered as one of the most influential cases throughout American History. The accuser, Homer Adolph Plessy, was a shoemaker born on March 17, 1863. He was a light skinned Creole of European and African Descent, being 7/8ths Caucasian. He was 1/8th black, having an African Great Grandmother. He was born in New Orleans, and that is where he resided for much of his life. He and his wife, Louis, lived at 244 ½ Claiborne Avenue in the integrated middle class neighborhood of Faubourg Treme, in New Orleans.

Plessy was part of the infamous Citizens Committee which had raised 3000 dollars to fight the Separate Car Act. This committee was stationed in Louisiana, which is where Plessy lived. They asked him if he would purchase a railway ticket for a white section of the railroad. He bought the ticket at around 10:00 on June 7, 1892. After he sat down, trying to live up to the task at hand, he told the conductor, J.J. Dowling, that technically he was black and he should be sitting in another seat. The Conductor told Plessy that he should move, since he was in the wrong seat. Plessy said no, saying that he was going to sit wherever he wanted. A detective was called to arrest Plessy, bringing him to The Fifth Precinct Station. He was jailed for 20 days, being let out onto the 27 of June.

Exactly a month later, on July 27, 1892, Plessy went to the Louisiana State Supreme Court to fight the Separate Car Act. He went with Albron Tourgee, the white lawyer that supported black rights. He went to the courts with a request. He wanted to abolish the Separate Car Act. The government had already said that everyone was equal, therefore by not allowing whites to sit with blacks, it caused disruption of black rights. This case was brought to the court of John Ferguson.

After careful consideration, Ferguson decided that The Separate Car Act did not violate The Separate Car Act. He stated that if a railroad company wanted to separate it’s people due to the fact that it would “make more people feel comfortable”, they were allowed. He said that the railroad was not trying to separate anyone but they were just trying to make everyone feel comfortable. John Ferguson left the court with the thought of solving a court case well, while Plessy left the court with a sense that he didn’t accomplish anything.

The court case of Plessy vs. Ferguson accomplished much. IT showed the black population that although it was outlawed by the constitution, many people were still not treating blacks with respect. The case of Plessy vs. Ferguson was later viewed by the Supreme Court of the United States in 1896. They ruled in favor of Ferguson, with a eight to one majority. They decided that what Ferguson said was exactly right.

This court is monumentally important because it created an idea called Separate but Equal. This idea, which was basically saying that although whites and blacks were separated everyone was equal, was used to keep segregation in the United States. It was a simple tool that allowed inequality to rip through the black communities.